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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3610

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

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SUBJECT: TURKEY/IRAQ: FM GUL AND UNSYG ANNAN DISCUSS
MEETING OF IRAQ'S NEIGHBORS

REF: 05 ANKARA 04230

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) Turkey's Iraq Coordinator Oguz Celikkol told Ambassador March 1 that, at a February 26 meeting in Doha, Foreign Minister Gul and UN Secretary General Annan discussed holding an "Iraq and its Neighbors" meeting of foreign ministers. This would be in the context of an existing series of "Neighbors of Iraq" meetings, the last of which (in its interior minister format -- see reftel) Turkey hosted in Istanbul in July 2005. Gul and Annan reportedly discussed expanding the format to include Iraq, the Perm-5 and UN. Celikkol said that such a meeting would show strong international support for the Iraqi leadership and for the unity of Iraq, with the goal of calming the security situation there. In their conversation, Gul reportedly suggested the initiative should come from the UNSYG. Celikkol implied that the ball is in Annan's court.

¶2. (C) Celikkol noted that it is Tehran's turn to host such a meeting, but that Turkey would also be willing to host again. He said it would be best to hold the meeting in the region, although other venues would be possible. Celikkol added that Turkey had been in touch with the Iranians on this; Tehran expressed interest but proposed waiting until the new Iraqi government is formed.

¶3. (C) Ambassador expressed great skepticism about senior level U.S. officials attending any meeting that included the Iranians. He added that the European P-5 members would likely feel the same way. Celikkol suggested the U.S. could be represented by Ambassador Khalilzad, given the latter's authority to deal with Iranian officials on Iraq-related matters. Ambassador undertook to relay this information to Washington.

WILSON